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DEVELOPMENT OF HUNGARY'S TEXTILE INDUSTRY

Experiments are being made at present with the planting of cotton in Hungary. The area considered suitable for cotton growing is estimated at 153,700 hectares. Since the industrial consumption of cotton for 1954 has been projected at about 5 million tons, savings in foreign currency would be appreciable. In 1948, planting experiments with Soviet and Bulgarian seed were undertaken over an area of about 11 hectares. In 1949, 365 hectares were planted and in 1950 the acreage was increased by 6,300 hectares. It is planned to increase the cotton acreage to 113,000 hectares between now and 1954 and it is hoped that by 1955 the entire Hungarian textile industry may be supplied with domestic cotton.

Before the war, a little less than half the demand for wool was supplied from domestic flocks. During the war, the sheep population decreased considerably. In 1938 there were about 1.6 million sheep, but in 1947, there were less than 0.5 million. It is the intention to restore the prewar sheep population by 1954.

Immediately after the war, production of hemp and flax had sunk to a low level. By means of governmental measures, however, the area planted in these crops was increased in 1949 to almost double the acreage in 1948. By 1950, approximately 23,000 hectares were planted to hemp, this being 5,665 hectares more than in 1938. This makes it possible to supply industrial requirements.

Planting experiments were begun in 1949 with ramie, which yields a more satisfactory final product than flax. It has the further advantage of being mothproof and producing large yields. At present, efforts are being made to solve certain technical problems.

Before the war, annually about 900 tons of imported jute were processed in three factories. Under commercial agreements, India and Pakistan are furnishing raw jute; however, experiments now are being made with kenaf, a plant which flourished in more northerly latitudes than jute and which has already been planted successfully as a jute substitute in the USSR.

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The Textile Research Institute works in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture. A special division for the cultivation of cotton has been established. The textile factories suffered severe damage during the war. Of the 360,000 spindles, about 160,000 were destroyed. The loss of spindles was greater than that of looms, so that the industry was faced with a severe yarn shortage.

The Three-Year Plan, which began in 1947, had as an objective the re-building of the textile so as to achieve a production 27 percent greater than that of 1938. The most urgent need was for increasing the number of spindles; Hungarian industry could not, however, supply these immediately. It was therefore necessary, as a temporary measure, to procure spindles from England. The government purchased the British Crest Ring Spinning Mill, which it reinstalled -- without its power plant -- in Pestszentlorinc. This factory was orginally built in 1906, was modernized in 1919, and operations were suspended in 1941. It has more than 72,500 spindles. Like most Hungarian textile factories, it is now working in two shifts. Another step toward the solution of the problem was the purchase of 30,000 spindles from the USSR. It is expected that these measures will raise the annual yarn output by 14 percent. The plant in Szeged, in which the Soviet machines were installed, has a high level of production and furnishes high-quality products. Production began in January 1950; maximum spinning capacity was achieved in the summer of 1950. It is planned to expand this plant by adding a weaving mill.

According to the Five-Year Plan begun in 1951, the production of the textile industry is to be increased by 92 percent. As compared with 1949, 1954 is to register an increase of 97 million square meters in cotton cloth production, 14 million square meters in woolen yard goods, and 2,450 tons in the production of knitted goods.

A new development in the textile industry is the mass production of ready-to-wear garments. The Five-Year Plan provides for the construction of new plants for making ready-to-wear garments and the expansion of existing plants. Production of ready-to-wear garments is to be increased to 7½ times the 1949 level.

Textile exports are of importance. In 1949 they amounted to about 5 million pounds sterling in value, being second only to grain exports. Between 1947 and 1949 about 20 percent of the total production was exported. Textiles play a role in most of the Hungarian trade agreements and will doubtless continue to be a major export commodity.

The government has assured the technical prerequisites for the fulfillment of the Five-Year Plan. In order to lend industry support, the USSR has sent Stakhanovites and has supplied modern textile machines. The plan provides for the mechanization of the cotton industry, which is the largest branch of the Hungarian textile industry. There will be, for instance, the import of a large number of machines from the German Democratic Republic. Because of their superior productivity, these machines will free qualified specialist workers for the weaving mills and other branches of the industry. Hungarian heavy industry produces winding machines with a higher warp velocity than the conventional type, which make it possible to use 89 to 90 gram warp spools instead of the old 28 to 30 gram spools. Experience to date indicates that raising the speed makes it possible for one person to attend 12 to 16 machines simultaneously.

In the Hungarian wool industry, Soviet wool and camel's hair are processed in such large quantities that it has been possible to reduce imports from capitalist countries. To increase production, the development plan also prescribes measures for maintaining the moisture of the air in worsted spinning mills. Ventilators such as those that have been used in the cotton industry, which were introduced only recently in the woolen industry, raise production between 5 and 6 percent, reduce wastage, and permit one operator to attend several machines. Carding machines are imported from Poland.

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In the flax industry, Soviet machines are to be used for breaking and softening. The introduction of cross spindles is expected to improve quality and reduce production costs. Improved working conditions in the departments preparing the fibers are to be achieved through the use of flax turbines, which damage the fibers less and produce less dust than the conventional process.

In the knitted goods industry the main problem is that of the introduction of conical spindles, which are the basis for the development of multipurpose machinery. In the silk industry the work of the weavers will be reduced by the use of thread guides, which will make it possible for a weaver to tend several machines and also improve the quality of the product.

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